



The art of good comedy



David Westgarth

Editor, *BDJ in Practice*

Timing is everything in life. For example, at the time of writing, I'm currently number 170,062 in a queue for tickets to see the NFL in London in October. The stadium has a capacity of 63,500, so you do the math.

It can also be terribly frustrating in publishing. Everything within the *BDJ* portfolio is correct at the time of going to press – unfortunately, as we found out throughout the pandemic, sometimes things move so quickly they can be outdated by the time they land with members. And so to this issue of *BDJ In Practice*, going online on Monday 8 July and landing with members from Friday 12 July onwards.

Yes, there is a distinct lack of 'general election' content. By the time ballots have been counted and results announced, this issue will have been put to bed with a cup of peppermint tea and onto the next we go.

Why am I showing you how the sausage is made, you cry. Well, it's rather important,

because depending on the outcome of the election, Wes Streeting will theoretically be in his often-repeated and promised meeting with the BDA to discuss contract reform. That's kind of a big deal, apparently. It may have been mentioned.

It's also rather important to highlight because, what if the Labour Party follows poll patterns conducted and wins the election but that meeting does not happen? Well, that's not worth thinking about really. It feels like the hopes and dreams of a profession are pinning their hopes upon the outcome of the election. Phrases like 'There is now probably the best chance in the last 16 years, for achieving a sustainable NHS dental service for patients, the profession but also for government and the taxpayer' put an incredible amount of pressure on the outcomes of these meetings and negotiations being successful. And, because of the timings, there is no immediate snap reaction.

Likewise if the current government retains its position. What will that mean for the future of the profession? The juxtaposition of saying contract reform is needed while offering marginal tweaks and little else is a cycle that needs to end. After sampling the feeling at the annual conference of Local Dental Committees followed by the feeling at Invisalign Live the

following day, apathy seems to be the word of the day. Pretty much everyone I had the opportunity to speak to has gone past the anger phase and into one of despair; the snap election called offers a window for change, many also commented. While the results will now be known, it is frustrating to not be able to comment with certainty.

What I can say with certainty is the remainder of 2024 will be fascinating. Since the election was announced, I sense that there's a tangible feeling of things are about to change. Not everyone I have spoken to is optimistic – call it realism, and they have been predicated on a change of government. So much money has been taken out of NHS dentistry throughout the years – where is the money going to come from to even get to an even keel? Will we see more incremental change or actual contract reform that will impact generations to come? Are expectations out of control, not high enough or just right?

Time will tell, and the story will be told in future, and I know I speak for the BDA, the GDC and the profession when I say that needs to be in bold action and not words. Whatever the outcome of the election is, the date of Monday 8 July heralds a new beginning for the profession. ♦
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41404-024-2783-x>